



**DALIT SOLIDARITY
NETWORK UK**
A world without caste discrimination

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House of Commons/Lords
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To

I write to you as the Director of the Dalit Solidarity Network UK, which campaigns against caste-based discrimination in the UK and Asia. I would like to draw your attention to the ongoing problem of caste-based discrimination in the South Asian diaspora communities here in the UK.

It is estimated that there may be as many as 400,000 Dalits (formerly known as 'Untouchables') living in the UK. There has been much documented evidence to show that they have been several instances of discrimination in these communities. This has affected the 'victims' rights in relation to education, employment and provision of goods and services. Caste discrimination is not based on religion, whatever its origins may have been. We certainly do not wish to make it so. This is an issue the Government must address, as it is severely affecting community relations among Hindu, Christian, Buddhist, Sikh and Muslim communities in the UK.

Caste was formally outlawed in the Equality Act as a subset of 'race', appearing on the statute books as of June 2013. However, the Government then introduced a lengthy consultation period of more than 2 years.

EHRC reports on 28 February 2014 confirmed that caste discrimination "cannot be tolerated and should be included in the protections against discrimination and harassment provided in the Equality Act 2010". The reports also questioned the proposed sunset clause "for a non-discrimination ground is legally without precedent and goes against this key differential".

Trustees: Jeremy Corbyn MP, John Cropper, Ramesh Gautam, Martin Hubbard,
Corinne Lennox, Revd David Haslam MBE, Ramani Leathard, Tom Palakudiyil, Rekha Rajkumar

Patrons: Singh Bahal, Rodney Bickerstaffe, Rt Revd John Gladwin (former Bishop of Chelmsford)
Professor Mary Grey, Rob Marris, Jean Lambert MEP, Dr Vincent Manoharan, John Montagu, Earl of Sandwich

I have recently been asked to give a presentation on caste-based discrimination and how it might affect access to work and conditions of employment to a group of blue-chip companies who have identified caste as an issue they should be aware of – both here in the UK and in their overseas supply chains. The ambiguities of the legislation as it stands make it much more difficult for the companies to understand and address this form of discrimination.

Please find enclosed a leaflet explaining the concept of the caste system and the effect it has on Dalits in the UK. We have distributed the leaflet because we believe one reason the Government is delaying implementation of the legislation is that many people outside Asian communities do not fully understand the severity of discrimination that Dalits face.

We urge you to make the illegality of caste a reality before Spring 2015 in order to protect the victims and potential victims of caste-based discrimination in Britain. Given the lengthy and on-going consultation, it looks unlikely that the legislation will be implemented before the May 2015 General Election, so the rights of Dalits will continue to be violated.

I know Dalit communities across the country will be supportive of your party's wider commitment to end caste-based discrimination by honouring your coalition Government's pledge to implement the legislation to finally outlaw caste-discrimination in the UK.

We ask you to do everything in your power to help implement that legislation.

DSN-UK Chair Jeremy Corbyn MP and I would be happy to meet with you at any time to brief you more fully.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Meena Varma', with a horizontal line underneath it.

Meena Varma
Director

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